

The Star-Ledger

Seven black leaders in one

1,500 students enjoy performance at Symphony Hall

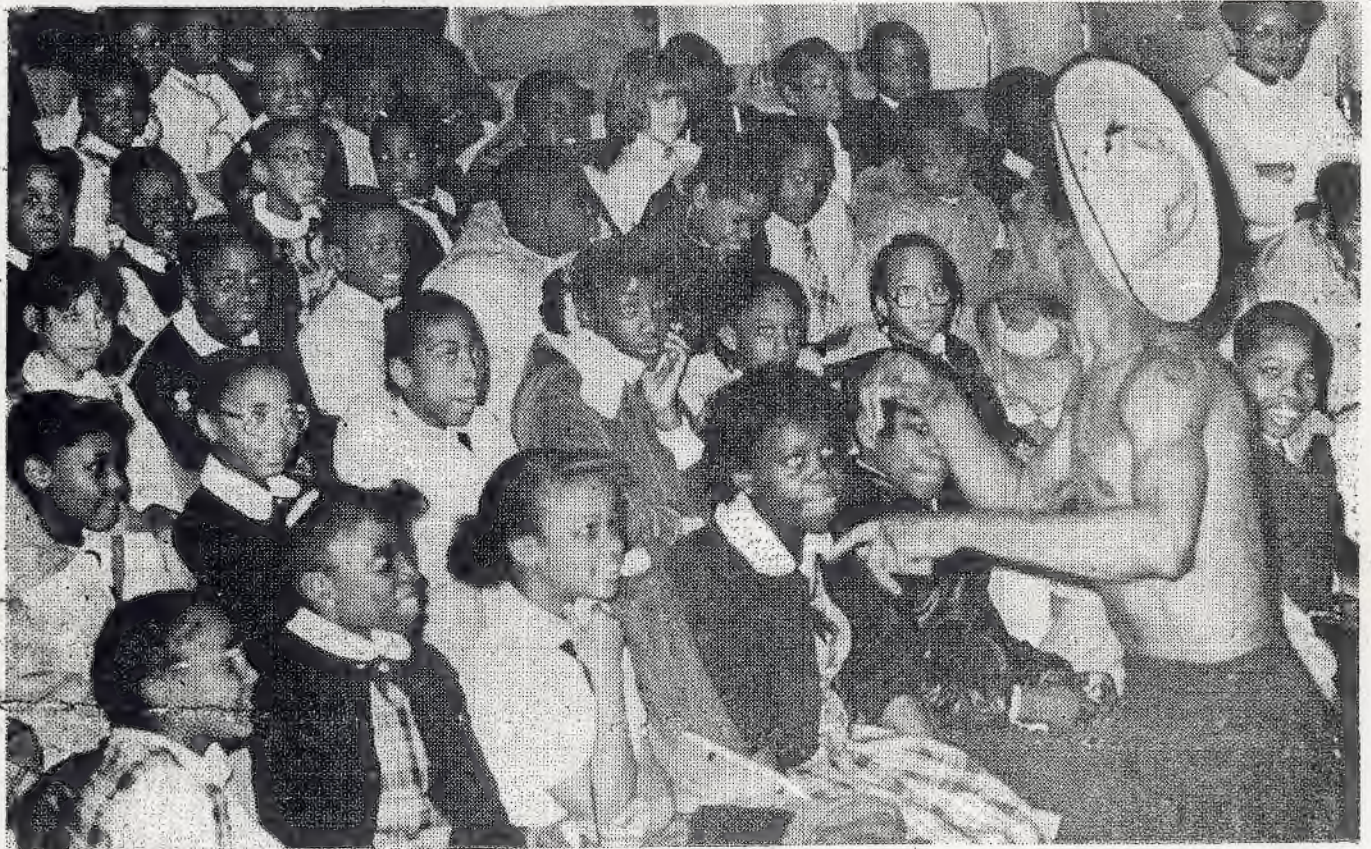


Photo by John A. Gibson Jr.

Actor Philip Walker entertains students in the Terrace Room of Symphony Hall

By JULIA KATRINA GRAHAM

Listening to every word and watching every move were 1,500 students as actor Phillip Walker depicted seven black leaders in his one-man show, "Can I Speak for You Brother?" at the Terrace Ballroom last Tuesday.

"The students really enjoyed the content of the play and format in which it was presented," said Phillip Thomas about the 55-minute show that "presented" Martin Luther King Jr., Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Haki Mandhubuti (Don Lee), W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington and Mingo Saunders.

During three performances, "Can I Speak for You Brother?" was given for students from St. Vincent's Academy, The Leaguers, Blessed Sacrament School, Valley Settlement House, St. Ann's Grammar School, Chad School, Sister Clara Muhammad School, Islamic School of New Jersey, Creative Garden School and St. Mary's.

There was a 25 cent admission fee per student.

"Phillip Walker was very expressive, in not only conveying verbally the content of the show, but in adding understanding through the use of his body and props. He was very successful in generating participation from the audience," Thomas said.

Thomas added, "Before booking Walker (at Newark Symphony Hall), I reached out to private and alternative schools and discussed the idea (of having Walker perform his show) with them to find out if they would be interested. We're (Symphony Hall) looking to interact with people in the school system."

On Wednesday, Symphony Hall presented "Our Seniors, Our Heritage" in which seniors from the Newark Housing Authority, Casa Mia, Lincoln Park Towers, Nevada Street Apartments, North Jersey Community Union, Emanuel Senior Center, Essex Plaza and the Newark Day Center were invited to hear poetry and music at the Terrace Ballroom.

The program featured original poetry readings by Judy Juanita and Daphne Benyard; musical performances by the Essex County College Choir, directed by Kathryn Hinton, and the Essex County College Community Gospel Choir, directed by Robert Banks. Constance Woodruff, chairperson of the New Jersey Advisory Committee on the Status of Women, was speaker.

The New Jersey Ballet Company, and the Ballet Hispanico of New York, will perform March 31 and May 25, respectively, as part of Symphony Hall's dance series for students in grades four through 12.

"I talked with principals of schools about the dance series we're presenting and encouraged them to get information to teachers, so teachers can generate interest to students," Thomas said.

"We have a commitment to serving the community and educational population. We're looking to work with the public and private school system and seniors to design programs to serve their needs," he added.



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